

Big TUC protest shows thousands want to fight >>Pages 4&5

Full reports and analysis of the rail and tube strikes Pages 2&3

CLASS STRUGGLE IS BACK

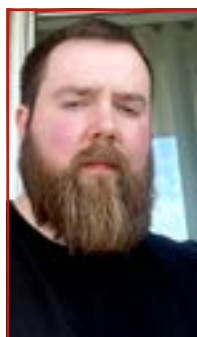
Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2810 | 22 - 28 June 2022 | socialistworker.co.uk



RMT UNION rail strikers in Portsmouth were joined on picket lines this week by trade unionists from across the city

'WE ARE STRIKING, YOU CAN TOO'



NETWORK RAIL WORKER SPEAKS OUT

>>PAGES 2&3

UKRAINE

Johnson meets Zelensky as Nato ready for wider war

JUST LIKE the last time he yearned for a popularity boost, Boris Johnson made a "surprise visit" to Kiev last week. He had a warm welcome from Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky.

The European Union and Nato are preparing for a war that lasts years.

>>Page 6

CLIMATE



Why the choice is socialism or extinction

A NEW book by Martin Empson argues for a revolutionary transformation away from fossil fuel capitalism.

We review the strategy and tactics needed to avoid climate disaster. The experience of revolutions offers hope.

>>Pages 14&15

TORY TROUBLES

New scandals expose the Tory party's rot

BY-ELECTION results this week were expected to increase the pressure on Boris Johnson.

And government officials intervened to stop wider publication of new scandal allegations about the prime minister that had been featured in The Times.

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THE THINGS THEY SAY

‘We need public sector pay discipline. Workers cannot expect a pay rise in line with inflation’

Simon Clarke, chief secretary to the Treasury

‘If we get this wrong, we risk going into a de facto general strike’

A cabinet minister tells the bosses’ Financial Times newspaper the government is walking a ‘delicate tightrope’ of keeping public sector wages down without provoking strikes

‘This is the biggest problem for the government this year’

Paul Johnson, of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, says keeping pay down is the government’s biggest worry

‘In any unionised workplace there is going to be a higher risk of a dispute in the next year or two than there has been for a couple of decades’

Neil Carberry, chief executive of the Recruitment & Employment Confederation, agrees



by SAMORD

OVER 50,000 rail workers have begun the fightback over the cost of living crisis.

The workers kicked off three days of walkouts on Tuesday, bringing Britain’s rail network to a standstill and inflicting fear in the Tory party.

The workers employed by Network Rail and 13 train operating companies are fighting for a proper pay rise and to stop job cuts.

Further strikes were planned for Thursday and Saturday.

Across Britain big picket lines showed strikers’ determination and confidence.

There were 40 on the picket line in Bournemouth and a similar number in Manchester. In Cardiff 80 strikers and supporters were on the picket.

In Swansea, Unison union members joined the picket. Hackney health workers brought their Unison banner and a message of support to pickets at Liverpool Street in London.

Climate activists were on the picket line at Bristol Templemeads.

Coventry bin strikers went to the rail workers’ picket line. In many places NEU union members came to show support.

There’s a real chance to build on the solidarity, with demonstrations for strikers and supporters in Bristol, Manchester and Liverpool planned on Saturday. Others should follow this initiative.

Network Rail worker Dan in Coventry hoped the action would be “the start of more action across more industries”.

Shaken

That’s why the strike has shaken the Tories. Not only does it show the power that workers have to shut down business and profit—it could encourage a much bigger fightback.

As Dan said, “Low pay affects everyone, we haven’t had a pay increase in over two years. If they attack one group of workers they will attack more.”

There is the money to give a pay rise to the workers and save jobs, on average the rail companies are making £500 million a year in profits. This should be reinvested into the rail network to protect jobs and services.

Marvin who works for the Greater Anglia train company, told Socialist Worker, “The rising cost of living is making it harder for everyone. We

Rail strikes show how we all can fight back over cost of living emergency



STRIKER MARVIN says the rising cost of living has made life harder for everyone

budget but with electric, petrol and kids it’s hard. It affects us mentally and our work-life balance puts extra pressure on us—it’s stressful.”

Dan added, “The media make out we’re striking for nothing.

“It’s not true that we’re all high paid but also, why shouldn’t workers have good wages for valuable work?”

Transport minister Grant Shapps is hell bent on attacking workers rather than resolving the dispute. “By carrying out this action the RMT is punishing millions of innocent people,” he said.

But Daniel Kennedy, a Network

Rail worker in Birmingham, said, “It’s easy for Grant Shapps and the bosses to say that—they get paid a fortune annually.”

The Tories are organising to break the strike with Shapps wanting to allow agency workers to cover striking staff temporarily.

That’s an attack on workers’ right to strike and must be opposed by more action.

Scot from Manchester Network Rail said, “We’re positive that with the public support and more strikes that we will win.”

The strike looks set to spread as rail managers in the TSSA union and drivers in the Aslef union are balloting to strike.

Daniel said, “My wider hope is to bring down the Tories.

“We won’t compromise on our demands, the Tories are to blame for the strike.

“If we are successful it will be an example to other workers that success is achieved through strikes.”

What’s your story?
Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk



Strikers at Waterloo station in London

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

“Low pay affects everyone. If they attack one group of workers they will attack more

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Tube workers coordinate action in fight over jobs

WORKERS ON the London Underground network walked out for 24 hours on Tuesday. They are being threatened with 600 job cuts and changes to pensions and working conditions.

If bosses get their way they would destroy workers’ work-life balance.

Members of the RMT union, and Unite union members mostly based in operations, management control and engineering roles, all walked out.

RMT East London Rail Branch Secretary, Wale Agunbiade told Socialist Worker, “With the amount of profit they’re making our demands are not a big ask.

“Workers make the trains run, we’re just asking for a fair deal but they put money first, workers second.”

Peter, a Tube striker and RMT member in east London, says it’s “bullshit” that bosses have to make cuts.

“The money is there,” he told Socialist Worker. “It’s



Striking to save jobs

about whose pocket they want it going to. Wealthy people have had tax cuts for the last ten years.

“The cost of living crisis is affecting us all, the pandemic affected us working class people, we’re all treated the same way by the bosses and the government.”

Wale added, “The support for us has been coming in from across the country. Everyone has it hard—someone has to fight back.”

The RMT and Unite must call more strikes immediately to keep the pressure on the bosses.



Strikers in Manchester

PICTURE: GEOFF BROWN

‘No trains, no scabs’—reports from picket lines all over Britain show strike was solid

THESE ARE just some of the reports Socialist Worker received on Tuesday.

Plymouth—around 12 strikers and a few extra supporters on the picket line. There was a general feeling that the 20 percent service being reported by the news sounds “impossible”. Four on the picket at Truro, nobody crossing so far.

Derby—a train manager said, “We worked during Covid and now we are left to rot”.

She told of dealing with crowded, deliberately oversold trains and angry passengers.

Sophie a train guard felt bosses

are coming for the station staff.

York—around 20 pickets, mainly from Network Rail, at 7am. One RMT member said, “This is about jobs and safety just as much as it is about pay.” Pickets at the Holgate Road depot got solidarity from two contractors, both ex-miners, who refused to cross the picket line.

Leicester—Rob, an NHS worker and Unison union rep, joined pickets and said, “During the pandemic it was the railway that got me to work. I’m here to show solidarity to the RMT.”

Manchester—40 pickets with support from the People’s Assembly,

Unison, PCS and UCU unions. A lot of pickets say the bottom line is to stop job cuts to protect services. But when asked about an above inflation deal people wanted it and were keen to achieve it.

Hastings—no trains, no scabs. **Wigan**—pickets turned around staff who turned up for work.

Several strikers mentioned how they felt supported by the solidarity on the TUC march.

Thanks to everyone who sent reports and pictures. More pictures and videos at @SocialistWorkerBritain on Facebook @socialistworker on Twitter, and @socialist_workers_party on Instagram

More, sustained action is the way to win

A WIN for the rail workers would put the Tories in turmoil. It would show that workers’ resistance can win. And it will give confidence to other workers also wanting to fight.

But the RMT had not announced more strike days as Socialist Worker went to press.

The government and multi-million pound companies that run the rail industry will not be taken down easily with a few days of strikes.

And neither can the strikes be used as simply a bargaining chip in negotiations—or held off for talks. That risks giving bosses the space to recover, and get back on the front

foot. The power of the action was that it shut down vast swathes of the rail network across Britain. Longer, sustained and determined action can force the bosses to concede.

And the aim needs to be for a pay increase at least in line with the RPI rate of inflation, currently 11 percent.

RMT leader Mick Lynch seems to be prepared to settle for 7 percent. That means a big pay cut.

And avoiding compulsory redundancies is not enough. Bosses will still take out thousands of jobs.

Network rail worker Daniel told Socialist Worker, “I think we need to target the Commonwealth Games.

ScotRail workers struck throughout the Cop26 climate talks last year and won some gains.” And another worker, Scot, added, “I don’t want to stop strikes any time soon.”

Solidarity with other workers also fighting over pay is important.

Action by RMT members could link with those in the Aslef union, working in control and signalling for train operators and Network Rail.

Striker Dan wants to link the rail battle with Royal Mail and BT workers who are also heading for pay strikes.

“Demonstrations are very good but we need more strikes to fight for our interests,” he said.

Labour Party won’t back workers who fight

THE LABOUR Party banned its shadow ministers—and their assistant MPs—from offering solidarity with strikers by joining picket lines.

The party is more bothered about showing it can get strikes called off than it is about supporting workers.

A message to shadow ministers from Labour leader Keir Starmer’s office said, “We do not want to see these strikes to go ahead with the resulting disruption to the public. The government have failed to

engage in any negotiations.

“However, we also must show leadership and to that end, please be reminded that frontbenchers including parliamentary private secretaries should not be on picket lines. Please speak to all the members of your team to remind them of this and confirm with me that you have done so.”

It comes after Starmer forced right wing MP Wes Streeting to apologise to the shadow cabinet for suggesting that, if he were a rail worker, he would strike too.

Streeting is sorry for backing workers



Anti-Tory rage fills streets of London on big march

by SOCIALIST WORKER JOURNALISTS

A MAJOR demonstration of trade union members on Saturday raised the prospect of a serious battle by workers against the Tories and the cost of living crisis.

The TUC union federation told Socialist Worker that “tens of thousands” had joined its national demonstration in central London.

Lots of activists said it was 50,000 or even more—it took two hours for everyone to leave the assembly point outside the BBC in Portland Place.

For the first time since 2018, all the major trade unions in Britain brought hundreds—if not thousands—of their members to march in blocs.

It was one of the biggest union demonstrations in the last decade and a real boost to activists everywhere. It showed the unions can still be a real force and can mobilise on the streets when they try.

The march was a focus for anger at the Tories and the social emergency of rising prices.

Jackie from the GMB union told Socialist Worker that she was “unhappy with how the Tories are running the country”.

“They are literally draining the money out of the system and allowing people to fall deeper and deeper into poverty,” she said.

Streets

“If working people don’t stand up, it’s only going to get worse. We won’t be able to afford to live. Writing to your MP is OK, but it’s not enough. You have to be part of a union. And you have to get out on the streets.”

Paul, a teacher and NEU union rep from Reading, said “I’m here to demand the government do better by us.”

“Our pay is going down in real terms and my colleagues are struggling to live. Conservatives are pushing the decline of working class people. We need a new government that does more.”

But the TUC march was also a focus for more general anger at

BACK STORY

There’s a mood to fight back against low pay and rising costs

●Some 50,000 workers flooded London’s streets on the TUC protest called Demand Better.

●RMT members were met with cheers and calls to follow their lead

●It shows that fighting back is inspirational to other groups of workers

●Now all workers must build struggle and support workers on strike

the Tories, and at how bosses used workers throughout the pandemic. NHS worker and Unison member Jane Walker told Socialist Worker, “The government needs to know we won’t shy away, we’ll stand up and fight.”

In the NHS it’s not just about pay, it’s about bullying management, it’s about how the frontline workers were treated during the pandemic. It’s about dangerously low levels of staffing.”

Climate change campaigners and anti-racist activists joined the march too.

Steph from climate group Just Stop Oil said, “The climate crisis and the cost of living crisis are inseparable and part of the same horrifying economic system. We also know it’s so important that we build a coalition between organised workers and the climate movement.”

Mark, a firefighter, took a placard from Stand Up To Racism, which also joined the march. He said, “Racism is a threat to all working class people—Boris Johnson has said unforgivable racist things.”

Several sections of the march joined chants of “Refugees are welcome here”, and there was horror at the way the Tories have tried to ram through deportations to Rwanda.



On other pages...

Britain’s rail network—a fast track to profit >> Pages 10&11



EDUCATION WORKERS were out in their thousands

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

‘The struggle is still on—we either fight or live on our knees’

THE TUC march came as some groups of workers begin the next stage of the fightback.

The RMT union was one of the most visible sections of the march.

Tens of thousands of rail workers are set to strike on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday this week. They are fighting over pay and jobs.

And they’ll be joined on Tuesday by London Underground workers, who have already struck twice against funding cuts.

Underground worker Leigh told Socialist Worker she was “Excited for the upcoming strike.”

“The whole country needs to stand up and fight for better pay,” she said. “I want to strike and join the others.”

“I’m struggling with the cost of living. I no longer put money on my gas, just electric. All we want is an inflation-beating pay rise.”

Other groups of workers, headed for their own major battles over pay, also joined the TUC march. The CWU union—



Demanding better

they’d impose a below inflation 2 percent pay increase.

Maria, a Royal Mail worker at Warrington mail centre, said, “Things are getting hard even on our wages.”

“Everyone at work is feeling deflated. People want to leave. It’s not a happy place anymore. I think we’ll get a 99 percent yes vote when we ballot—maybe even 100 percent.”

Many union leaders at the rally at the end of the march spoke of the need for a united fightback.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said—despite hostility from the Tories and the media—striking rail workers could rely on solidarity.

“We won’t settle,” he said. “The struggle is still on—we’ll keep striking. We either fight or live on our knees.”

Union leaders have to put words into action.

And trade union activists should use the march as the launchpad for new fights that beat the bosses and crush the Tory government.

with the bulk of its members in the postal and telecoms industries now in national pay disputes—was another major contingent.

Its members working for BT group—BT, Openreach and EE—began balloting last Wednesday for strikes (see page 19).

And its members in Royal Mail are gearing up for their own ballot after bosses said last week

Build NHS battles after insulting pay offers

CRUCIAL battles are coming in the NHS. This week millions of workers in NHS England were expecting to receive the government’s annual pay offer.

It will certainly be less than the RPI inflation rate of over 11 percent and might be just 3 percent.

In Scotland the government has offered a five percent deal. Workers are furious at yet another below-inflation rise.

Mental health nurse Pauline Brady, who is in the RCN union in the west of Scotland, told Socialist Worker she wants to see strikes in response.

“It’s utterly insulting,” she said. “Think back to last year when we were given

around 4 percent. That increase saw staff either worse off, or with only a coffee a month improvement.

“Now we are in an even worse position.” Pauline is hoping that this time the unions put up a fight. “Everyone has the right to strike and we should use it,” she said.

Unions in Scotland

have been quick to dismiss the deal as “not enough”. But if there’s going to be a fight for decent pay, the union leaders have to do more.

Rank and file activists—across Britain—need to start organising workplace meetings over pay and the cost of living crisis, and raise strikes.

The mood is growing for better pay

Superspreading the good cheer?

Covid rates are increasing...

COVID infections are dramatically rising across Britain, with two new fast-spreading Omicron variants driving the increase.

The latest figures estimate around 1.4 million people were positive on the weekend of the queen’s jubilee. It marks a rise of 43 percent in just a week.

The large scale public gatherings, with no restrictions at most, will have given the

disease opportunities to spread.

Scientists say that new strains, called BA.4 and BA.5, can be caught by people even if they’ve recently had other types of Covid. They may soon become the dominant strains in Europe and the US.

It could be the start of another wave of deadly infections. Yet the government is choosing to ignore it, recently closing down

the Test and Trace service.

And it couldn’t come at a more disastrous time for the health service. Data revealed last week that nearly 6.5 million people in England are waiting for hospital treatment—a record high.

Each time shambolic government policy allows the virus to gain the upper hand it further decimates our health service and puts us all in danger.

...and so are second jobs

Dramatically rising inflation is forcing people to take on second jobs to boost their income.

A report from job search website Total Jobs said 17 percent of workers had taken a second job with this figure rising to 20

percent for essential workers.

And a survey by the Usdaw union found that a quarter of supermarket workers are skipping meals due to rising costs.

Some workers have taken extra work at Deliveroo which has

experienced a 36 percent increase in active workers since January last year.

Freelancing site, People per Hour is experiencing a 33 percent increase and Uber is increasing its drivers from 70,000 to 90,000.

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

BIG STRIKES SHOW OUR SIDE CAN FIGHT AND WIN

OPEN CLASS war is back. It was a joy on Tuesday to see the media awash with reports of workers’ fighting back and showing their power.

We have waited years for a flowering of organised workers’ resistance, and now we have a much stronger vision of what it could be.

Far too often our side gets pummelled by those at the top. But strikes show we can resist and win.

Class is supposed to be outdated. But strikes underline that the main division is society is between those who do the work and those who own and control the levers of production.

Strikes reveal to everyone who actually does the work in society.

The commands of managers and chief executives can’t make the trains run. The pompous denunciations from politicians and newspaper owners don’t stop the pickets.

There are many ways that working class people fight back. Demonstrations and occupations and campaigns matter.

But strikes are special. They unlock workers’ greatest

strength—the ability to turn off the source of profits.

The shareholders and bosses of the train operating companies depend utterly on the sweat and the skill of workers. And using workers’ strength is the basis for an alternative way of running society where ordinary people collectively decide what happens.

Often this basic truth is hidden. But sticking it to the bosses means clawing back power from those who rule above us.

And strikes can be a focus for all the different fights we need. It was noticeable that in several areas climate activists came to the rail picket lines. Too often trade unions seem remote or even

hostile to a militant fight for the environment.

But climate activists felt they could unite with the strikers.

Every successful strike has to have a sense of collective action. In that atmosphere it’s possible to begin undermining the divisions of race gender, religion or sexuality that are pumped out from the top.

But it’s not enough to celebrate what happened this week.

We know this is a moment of opportunity, the Tories know it’s a moment of danger. For many years, despite occasional outbursts, they have been able to celebrate a very low level of strikes.

They don’t want that to change, especially when there is a political crisis and millions feel their living standards are on the line.

The Tories bluster about using agency workers and passing new laws about minimum service levels. It shows their ruthlessness. But such measures mean nothing if our side mobilises.

This week we had a glimpse of workers’ power. We need a lot more of this. And instead of parliamentary games we need socialist politics that are based on the strength of strikes and protests.

“Strikes reveal clearly to everyone who actually does the work in society”

FROM ONE STRIKE TO MANY

THE RAIL strikes have shown there’s a chance to unite workers against the bosses and the Tories. This week showed a spontaneous sense of solidarity among many activists—and a wish to hit back as well.

It could transform the class struggle. One big strike shakes the Tories. Several together could rout the government and win real pay rises.

But it will take a fight to make it happen. Many union leaders are dragging their feet. TUC general

secretary Frances O’Grady admitted that the energy is coming from below, not the top.

“I’ve been asked a number of times where we are going to be coordinating action, and I wouldn’t rule that out” she said.

“But the point is that workers are coordinating themselves, not out of any deliberate strategy.”

Everywhere working class people are under intense pressure. Only struggle can stop the rampant spread of hardship and poverty. Millions of public sector

workers are now facing pay cuts. The government is telling NHS, school, local government, civil service and other workers that they will get a “rise” that’s far less than inflation.

The union leaders can’t run away from the need to mobilise resistance. It would be best for everyone to fight together. But the chance for “unity” can’t be used to postpone or avoid any group from fighting themselves.

Back the rail strikers—and spread the action.

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ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Interest rates used as 'a sledgehammer'

WE HAVE entered a world characterised by extreme instability. Even if the people managing the major capitalist economies are mainly boringly familiar, circumstances are forcing them into extreme policy reversals. The latest example is provided by the panic over inflation.

The rapid upsurge in the rate of inflation since last summer is itself a symptom of the deepening instability. For more than a decade, price increases in the big economies struggled to rise much above zero.

Now they're pushing into double figures, the highest in 40 years.

Higher inflation reflects the recovery in the global economy from the biggest slump since the Second World War, caused by the initial peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-1.

Demand for goods and services rose amid disrupted supply chains, workers changing jobs or dropping out of the labour market, and increasing international competition for natural gas. The war in Ukraine has pushed up food and energy prices more.

China is the exception. In May the consumer price index actually fell by 0.2 percent compared to the previous month. China's economy has been depressed by the lockdowns imposed on cities such as Shanghai and Beijing.

The government is trying to boost growth by encouraging firms to invest and produce more, especially for the booming export market.

The central banks that became the main economic managers in the neoliberal era are panicking. Since the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-9 they have kept interest rates very low and pumped money into the financial system.

The central bankers are terrified of a "wage-price spiral". They fear that workers may seek to defend their real wages by striking for higher pay. So they are clobbering workers—and indeed the entire economy.

The main instrument is higher interest rates. This started with the Bank of England (BoE) in February, but now the US Federal Reserve Board is in the lead. Last week it increased interest rates by 0.75 percent.

Usually changes in interest rates come in much smaller doses of 0.25 percent but the Fed wanted to make a point.

The Financial Times newspaper's Unhedged column explains that this policy "makes credit more expensive, so companies invest less and consumers spend less. It makes asset prices fall and asset markets less liquid, so companies and households become poorer and less inclined to spend. It makes people not get hired and it makes people get fired. It does this quite indiscriminately. It is not a scalpel, it is a sledgehammer. It smashes things."

Increases

The BoE and Swiss central bank also raised interest rates, and the Europe Central Bank says it will start doing this in July. And Fed chair Jay Powell made it clear there will be more increases—maybe as high as 1 percent in a go.

The Fed is also planning to end its policy of quantitative easing—that is, buying government and corporate bonds as a way of ensuring financial markets have the money they need to function effectively. The danger with this "quantitative tightening" is that it may cause the money markets to freeze as they did in 2019-20, even before the pandemic hit.

Powell says that he hopes these policies will force down inflation quickly without precipitating a recession. But no one seems to believe anymore in this "softish landing", as he calls it. This is why stock markets have been falling worldwide.

The central banks' "sledgehammer" will push up unemployment as a way of compelling workers to accept huge cuts in their real wages.

The last time something like this happened was in October 1979 when the new Fed chair Paul Volcker imposed a brutal monetary tightening.

This was the turning point in the advent of neoliberalism globally. The resulting recession in the US was exported globally via a strengthening dollar that precipitated the Third World debt crisis.

I don't myself expect something like the "Volcker shock" this time. My guess is that the central banks will eventually retreat to more expansionary policies. And workers striking for higher wages can help force this retreat.



JOHNSON AND Volodymyr Zelensky had a warm meeting last weekend

PICTURE: NUMBER 10 ON FLICKR

Nato ready to escalate war as Boris Johnson meets Zelensky

by CHARLIE KIMBER

JUST LIKE the last time he yearned for a popularity boost, Boris Johnson made a "surprise visit" to Kiev last week.

He met Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky—and, said Johnson, "In particular, we talked about the need to increase the supply of heavy weapons."

Zelensky greeted Johnson with a "Hi, Boris" as he arrived at the presidential palace.

Johnson confirmed Britain would offer Ukrainian forces a major training programme which would have the capacity to train as many as 10,000 soldiers every 120 days.

This is an admission that the war will grind on at a terrible cost for ordinary Ukrainians and Russians.

In an article in the Sunday Times, Johnson called for "constant funding and technical help" for Ukraine which should, he wrote, be maintained for "years to come". Nato secretary general Jens Stoltenberg also warned that "we must be prepared for this to last for years."

Speaking to German newspaper Bild, Stoltenberg said, "We must not weaken in our support of Ukraine, even if the costs are high—not only in terms of military support but also because of rising energy and food

prices." Johnson's visit came a day after European Union (EU) leaders went to the Ukrainian capital. They too pledged to shower Ukraine with more and heavier weaponry.

At the same time, the European Commission adopted a recommendation that Ukraine is granted EU candidate status, a first step in the process of becoming a member of the bloc.

The war in Ukraine has been used to expand the EU's role. It will be not be simply a policeman to protect business and obstruct "radical" social policy. It will also be increasingly a military group dominated by Europe's major



Jens Stoltenberg

imperialist powers. The war is accentuating all the tensions between the West, Russia and China.

And that is further intensified by the economic

pressures from spiralling inflation. The Nato summit in Madrid later this month will be a council of escalating war.

Nato defence ministers concluded two days of talks for the summit on Thursday.

Stoltenberg said the summit would address key areas, including strengthened deterrence and defence and Finland and Sweden's applications for membership of the warmongers' alliance.

On Wednesday evening, Nato members met with Ukrainian defence minister Oleksii Reznikov. Stoltenberg said, "Allies have announced additional assistance, including much-needed heavy weapons and long-range systems."

Looking to a future of heightened militarism, Stoltenberg said Nato wants "to strengthen our battlegroups in the eastern part of our alliance. More air, sea and cyber defences, as well as pre-positioned equipment and weapon stockpiles

Without any genuine democratic discussion, a giant leap is taking place towards building up Nato countries' military power.

And it is happening as workers' lives are squeezed.

The Stop the War Coalition has called a day of action this Saturday to coincide with the Nato summit in Madrid. For details go to bit.ly/STW2506

A proxy war worsens

NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg boasted last week that there had been seven consecutive years of rising defence investment across European Nato members and Canada. But he wanted more. "Now is the time to keep up the momentum," he said. This is the sort of rhetoric that drives toward wider war. Ukraine has said

recently that its forces have hit a Russian naval tugboat with two Harpoon missiles in the Black Sea. It is the first time it has claimed to have struck a Russian vessel with Western-supplied anti-ship weapons. Russian forces continue to pound cities in eastern Ukraine, causing mass destruction and appalling casualties.

Tory plan to tag, harass and deport refugees

As they prepare for another Rwanda deportation flight, the Tories are planning to electronically tag refugees, reports Isabel Ringrose

THE TORIES continue to ramp up their attacks on migrants and refugees despite their thwarted deportation flight to Rwanda on Tuesday of last week.

People claiming asylum in Britain and waiting for official refugee status—an arduous process that takes years—could be electronically tagged.

A 12-month pilot scheme that began last Wednesday will see those arriving in small boats or on the back of lorries monitored by the Home Office.

The first people likely to be tagged are those who avoided deportation to Rwanda after appeals were made to the European Court of Human Rights.

The first Rwandan deportation flight set to escalate the government's assault on refugees did not take off last week. A series of legal challenges throughout the day pulled the remaining seven refugees off the flight.

Cancelled

Dozens more had already had their tickets cancelled following challenges. There were demonstrations against the flight at the Home Office, Rwanda House, Brook House and Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centres, the Royal Courts of Justice and MOD Boscombe Down.

Stand Up To Racism held protests in many parts of Britain.

The cancellation of the flight was a victory, but the Tories aren't giving up. And the threat of tagging will escalate the criminalisation of people coming to Britain.

In a similar way to people leaving prison, asylum seekers will be monitored. They will be forced to report in person to authorities and put under curfew or excluded from specific locations.

Failure to adhere to strict rules could result in detention, prosecution or deportation.

Collecting data and following migrants' movements creates

BACK STORY

A deportation flight to Rwanda was prevented from leaving last week

● The European Court of Human Rights ruled that the flight should be called off due to a "real risk of inhuman and degrading treatment"

● Anti-racists held furious protests against the flight across Britain. Stop Deportations protesters blockaded Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre

excuses to deport and expands the hostile environment. Clare Moseley from the charity Care4Calais said, "I think it's outrageous. Refugees in general do not abscond. They are here to claim asylum, so why would they? They're not criminals, they're victims."

"Things happen to them—they didn't cause it. It's just another part of the government criminalising refugees, which is basically victim-blaming."

Boris Johnson defended the plan last Saturday, boasting of Britain's supposed generosity. He added that a distinction has to be made "when people come here illegally".

This is despite the Afghan and Ukrainian refugee schemes—which offers some of the only legal routes into Britain—completely failing.

Labour Party leader Keir Starmer played into the Tory lie that smugglers are the root of Britain's asylum problem. He said, "What I want is a serious response."

"Everybody wants to clamp down on the gangs. That requires grownup work with the French authorities."

"You don't do that if you're a government that is asking the National Crime Agency to make cuts."

The Tories are seething that their deportation scheme has been halted and will hit back with harsher measures. Anti-racists must resist every racist policy and deportation.



PROTESTS, SUCH as this one over the Rwanda flight, will be needed again

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

The problem with Keir Starmer is much worse than being boring

RIGHT WING Labour politicians have been sharpening their knives for Keir Starmer as—despite the Tories' crisis, and the cost of living social emergency—the party struggles to break through.

Starmer had to confront his own shadow cabinet last week after some of them complained to the right wing press that he was too boring.

This followed a lengthy discussion on the need for unity, which one shadow minister immediately described to the right wing press as "ironically very boring."

It came after shadow cabinet ministers complained to the right wing Times newspaper that Starmer was "boring everyone to death."

They added that Starmer's "locker is empty" and he "doesn't exist" to voters.

Warned

And they warned that the Labour Party conference in September would be Starmer's "last chance" to prove himself to the right.

Another said, "There's no energy or direction from his team. We don't need a full manifesto but we do need a big vision, clear priorities and a bold offer. What are they waiting for?"

Labour politicians are frustrated that Starmer's war on the left and lurch to the right hasn't delivered

the runaway success they had hoped for. Some—such as Wes Streeting—are even widely reported to have begun preparing for leadership challenges.

Their warnings came ahead of the Wakefield by-election on Thursday of this week.

If Labour wins, Starmer will be able to present the result as evidence that his leadership is delivering the results the right want.

If it loses, most Labour politicians will likely argue that it needs an even more right wing leadership.

Streeting told the Mirror newspaper on Sunday that the by-election was a "big test" for Starmer's leadership.

"We win it—it shows Labour is on the path back to government. We lose—we will face serious questions," he said.

On the same day, his friend and ally MP Stella Creasy wrote in the Observer newspaper that Starmer hadn't done enough to denounce the outcome of Brexit.

She called on Starmer to say more about how Britain should have a closer relationship with the European Union in the interests of British businesses.

Labour's real problem is that it has nothing to say to ordinary people on the defining issue of the cost of living. All of Labour's

leading politicians went out of their way to show they didn't back this week's rail strikes.

Shadow cabinet member Lisa Nandy boasted that only Labour would be able to get strikes called off for talks with bosses who don't want to pay up.

"The reason that you haven't got strikes in Wales and you have got strikes in England is because in Wales you've got a Labour government, and in England you've got a Tory government," she said.

Strike

"It's not about whether workers go on strike. It's about the fact we have got a government that is currently on strike and not doing its job."

And in a speech on Sunday, Starmer accused the Tories of wanting strikes to go ahead so they could "feed off division."

In contrast, he said, Labour would be able to get strikes called "in the national interest."

It's a signal that, as class battles over the cost of living come to dominate politics and people's lives, Labour is the party of compromise—whether it's Streeting, Nandy or Starmer in charge.

Nick Clark

Vote for change in Colombia

LEFT-LEANING Gustavo Petro has won the presidential race in Colombia after beating right wing business tycoon Rodolfo Hernandez.

His win is a sign that the Colombian people desperately want a change from right wing presidents that have come to dominate the country's politics.

Petro—who promised land reform, a transition away from fossil fuels and raising taxes on some of Colombia's wealthiest families—received 50.5 percent of the votes.

In the first round of the presidential election, Petro won some of the poorest regions.

While a mood for change is to be celebrated, it is right to be wary of Colombia's new leader.

In his youth Petro was a part of the guerrilla group of the 19 April movement, but his politics today are decidedly less radical.

For decades, Petro has worked inside and within the political establishment and served in congress and as Mayor of Bogota.

Left wing or establishment friend?

And Petro is no worry for the US, which counts Colombia as a close ally. Anthony Blinken, the US secretary of state, said that he was "looking forward" to working with Petro.

"We are going to develop capitalism in Colombia," Petro told supporters on Sunday.

Development is needed to overcome the "feudalism" and "pre-modernity" from which Colombia still suffers, he said.

But Colombia is already a thoroughly capitalist country.

Protests last year shook Colombia after former president Ivan Duque planned to raise taxes on essential items. The demonstrations were so massive that they forced Duque to concede some reforms.

This appetite for change has brought Petro to power, but the Colombian people cannot stop there. In the last year several left wing leaders have been elected in Latin America, including in Peru and Chile.

This shows that across the region, ordinary people have a shared feeling that amid economic turmoil and rising poverty, they need change at the top.

But more than that, they need a movement on the streets and workplaces.

Huge blow for pro-boss French president Macron

by CHARLIE KIMBER

FRANCE'S RIGHT wing president Emmanuel Macron took a shattering blow in elections last Sunday. He lost his majority in parliament by a big margin. Needing 289 seats, he won just 245.

Five years ago Macron's party and its allies had 356 seats. The decline is a damning verdict on his failures during the pandemic, his rule for the rich and his savage assaults on the Yellow Vest movement.

It's also payback for his lack of action over the cost of living crisis.

Left wing Jean-Luc Melenchon's New Popular Ecological and Social Union (Nupes) took 131 seats, and will be the main opposition. It is fewer than some had hoped, but still an advance. Its success is a very welcome sign of the enthusiasm for a left alternative.

Notable victories included Rachel Keke, a hotel cleaner and leading figure in the Ibis hotel strike in Batignolles.

"We are the ones who live in deprived areas and do key jobs," she said. "We are the ones who are held in contempt and are exploited. So let us defend ourselves in parliament."

All of these results have to be set against a turnout of just 46 percent.

Disillusioned

More than half of potential voters are so disillusioned by the system that they didn't vote, even in a very high-profile parliamentary election.

Stripped of a majority in parliament, Macron will rely on his allies to the right.

That will include the traditional conservatives—with 64 seats—and even the Nazis of the National Rally party (see right) in some parliamentary votes.

In the run-up to the vote, Macron tried to witch hunt Nupes as dangerous and anti-democratic.

It wasn't so long ago that Macron and his allies were busy embracing Melenchon's supporters. They needed their votes to defeat Nazi Marine Le Pen in the April presidential run-off.

Bus, as the France24 channel says, "Two months on, the ruling party has singled out the veteran leftist and his fledgling coalition as the new threat to the Republic."

"In the words of Macron's former education minister Jean-Michel Blanquer, Nupes is an extreme 'just as dangerous as Le Pen's far right'."

Nupes is made up of five parties including Melenchon's France Unbowed (LFI) and the Labour-type Socialist Party, the Communists and the Greens. The combined vote for these forces a week ago was similar to that in 2017. Together they



CAMPAIGNING FOR Nupes candidate Rachel Keke

made a breakthrough—but at the price of involving more pro-business elements such as the Socialist Party. The French Greens are also far from radical.

To hold Nupes together, LFI dropped measures such as the establishment of a commission on police violence, a ban on redundancies in large companies and nationalisation of banks.

Vibrant

But Nupes' success gave a massive momentum to the left with vibrant campaigns between last week's election and Sunday's vote.

French politics is polarising and entering even more stormy times where the key battles will be in the streets and the workplaces.

The key issue now is whether those who voted left—and those who abstained—can be mobilised to push back the bosses and the government assaults. An early test will come when Macron seeks to attack pensions.

The battles against low pay, inequality, racism, fascism and for people's rights have to be taken up outside the parliamentary institutions.

Struggle from below, not electoral manoeuvres will determine the outcome.

More online

Longer report at
www.socialistworker.co.uk

Gains in parliament for Marine Le Pen's Nazis

IT WASN'T all good news. The fascist Marine Le Pen's National Rally party (RN) grabbed 89 seats. It took just eight in 2017, and smashes its previous high of 35 seats. That was back in 1986 under a more proportional system.

The fascists' parliamentary score goes—1997 one seat, 2002 0 seats, 2012 0 seats, 2017 one seat, 2018 eight seats, 2022 89 seats.

The fascists are a continuing danger who have gained from Macron's racism and Islamophobia. They have falsely claimed to be on the side of ordinary people as prices soar and living standards plummet.

The RN has become the focus for many voters who used to vote for more mainstream parties.

And it has been so normalised by other parties' racism that it is viewed by many as just part of the normal political spectrum.

In runoffs for seats that were head-to-head competition between Nupes and the RN, 72

Nazi Le Pen is happy

percent of Macron's first round voters abstained, 16 percent voted Nupes, 12 percent RN. First round conservative voters went 30 percent for the RN, 12 percent for Nupes.

It's more urgent than ever to strengthen united front activity against the RN.

This cannot be postponed or forgotten because Nupes did well.

New mood is catchy

A PROTEST meeting in Bristol recently gave us a glimpse of an emerging new mood for action.

Organised by the People's Assembly Against Austerity and the Unite union, it was attended by around 40 people, overwhelmingly trade unionists.

Many contributors said there's now a need for resistance and reported rising anger in many workplaces.

A member of the Unison union talked about a number of local disputes they are involved in. That triggered a serious discussion about how to win national strike ballots and overcome the current legal barriers.

The explosive rise in inflation is what lies behind the new wave of anger.

Many in the meeting reported on how this pushed workers towards seeing the need to be organised.

The impact of the recent left success in elections in France opened up discussions around alternatives to Labour.

While many were for remaining inside Labour, it was clear that there was not much confidence in the strategy.

When the issue of climate change came up—and its connection to the coming rail strike — many agreed that we should demand more public transport run for human and environmental needs, rather than for profit.

We agreed a proposal to organise a rail strike support march. This gives everyone a chance to back the rail workers—and take the new mood of anger at the bosses and their system on to the streets.

Huw Williams
Bristol



Our uni fought on and won—despite union leaders' betrayal

SOCIALIST WORKER has reported the way leaders of the UCU education union conspired to undermine national action over pay inequality in universities (Socialist Worker, 23 May).

Mine was one of the last union branches involved in the marking and assessment boycott that was an important part of the battle.

The action was part of the union's long running "Four Fights" campaign against casualisation—and to close race, gender and other pay gaps in universities.

The UCU at University of the Arts London stood firm against a management threat to deduct 100 percent of our pay as a punishment for taking action.

Maintaining the boycott was far from easy, especially given the

lack of support from our union general secretary and senior full time officials.

Their attempts to block waves of democratically mandated industrial action rightly angered many rank and file union members.

But with support from other union branches, and with the help of grassroots networks such as the UCU Left and the UCU Solidarity Movement, our local fight has secured an important agreement.

This includes withdrawal of the threat of pay deductions, the extension of a one-off bonus to hourly paid teaching staff, and a commitment to work with UCU to close the pay gaps.

This outcome represents a small but significant win. Though

it was stressful at the time, our branch now feels more confident and stronger as a result of this battle.

By taking action alongside the other branches that also continued the fight, we have kept the flames of the national Four Fights campaign alight.

This struggle is far from over. All British university branches are going to be re-balloted for further strikes and action short of strikes this summer.

I am not alone in imagining what could have been won if we'd all struck together with the backing of the official structures of our union behind us right from the start.

UCU Representative
University of the Arts London

Filthy trading of human beings now in the skies

WHAT A disgrace that airline firm Privilege Style agreed to fly refugees from Britain to camps in Rwanda.

Unfortunately its not the first time the Spanish-owned firm has lost its moral compass.

It has already accepted bloody money from the British government to transport "illegal immigrants" and "foreign criminals" to Jamaica.

And it was prepared to

help the German government force back refugees from Afghanistan.

When it's not making money from misery, Privilege rents its jets out to holiday firms, including the giant TUI UK.

But TUI also knows a thing or two about the horrors of deportation flights. It previously topped the list of firms involved in the filthy human trade.

Eugene Bullard
By email

This time the cops must get sacked

IT WAS good to hear the news last week that four Met police officers now face a gross misconduct case over Child Q—the east London schoolgirl they unlawfully strip searched.

The new, higher charges could lead to the officers getting sacked.

But the investigation into the cops is not taking place because the Met thought it was the right thing to do.

It is because of the anger of ordinary people.

The scandal of Child Q happened nearly two years



ago, but when the news of it emerged earlier this year there was outrage across Britain.

There were large demonstrations on the streets of Hackney in March, and many new

cases of police abuse were revealed afterwards.

That shows that anti-racists can't stop here.

Time and time again we've seen investigations into the Met leading nowhere.

This time we insist the four cops are fired.

Alongside them should be those at the top of the force who choose to protect their officers instead of the children of Hackney.

Naima Omar
East London

Just a thought...

Curse of boring Keir

SO LABOUR leader Keir Starmer has put together a group of comedians to stop him from being so boring.

His advisers clearly think that if Starmer can sprinkle a few more jokes among his empty promises then he'll be on to a winner.

But the real reason why Starmer is so boring is that he has absolutely nothing of interest to say.

Fred
By email

HOW ON Earth can it be that any politician can be lower on the popularity scales than Boris Johnson?

The prime minister is so widely hated that he was even booed at the queen's Jubilee.

And yet, Labour's Keir Starmer has seemingly managed the impossible. More people trust Johnson to lead the country than him.

Rose Horne
Carlisle

How bad can Biden get?

I REMEMBER how happy I was when Donald Trump lost his battle for re-election as US president in 2020.

Though I never thought Biden was the best choice for Democrat candidate, I didn't believe that he could make the country worse than it was.

Now I'm starting to worry that maybe he can.

We're in a new unwinnable "forever war" in Ukraine. Prices are going through the roof. And now the bankers have decided that unemployment is a price worth paying to get inflation down.

Bob Jones
New Hampshire

Why isn't virus news?

THERE HAS been remarkably little mainstream media coverage of the threat posed by new coronavirus sub-variants.

The highly infectious, vaccine-resistant Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 strains are quickly becoming dominant globally and threaten a new wave. How come this isn't news?

George5
On Twitter

ON A FAST TRACK TO PROFIT

Bosses and the government accuse rail strikers fighting back for job security and pay of being ‘wreckers’.

Sam Ord investigates who really profits from this system, how they can be beaten—and how decent public transport can help the fight against climate change

RAIL WORKERS have gone into battle against the greedy companies that have wrecked the railways for commuters and workers alike.

Bosses’ profiteering has led to commuters regularly facing delays, cancellations and soaring ticket prices. Workers face stagnant wages, worsening conditions and threats of job losses.

While working class people suffer from the profit driven rail system, rail chiefs cash in.

Network Rail is described as an “arm’s length” public body of the Department for Transport. Its senior staff deny workers an above inflation pay rise, yet they are some of the highest paid public sector bosses.

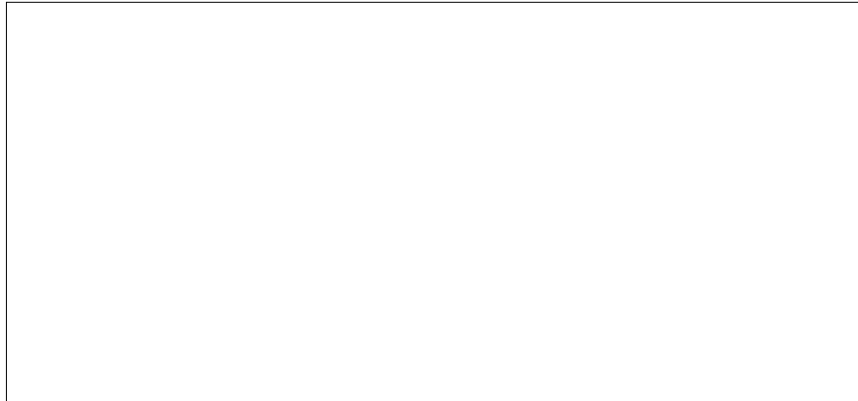
In 2021 Network Rail CEO Andrew Haines took a huge £585,000 annual wage. Chief financial officer Jeremy Westlake grabbed £415,000. Route services managing director Susan Cooklin got at least £385,000.

The top ten highest paid people at Network Rail gorge on a total of up to £3.68 million each year. Meanwhile Network Rail is advertising a customer service assistant and a station control assistant jobs that pay just £20,000.

Britain’s train network allows millions of people to commute into city centres from rural areas in the most environmentally friendly way. But continuous cuts to routes means people pay more to be packed into sweaty carriages.

This corner cutting means infrastructure isn’t modernised and commuters are left stranded or forced to endure rail replacement buses.

The Tories and their rail boss mates want a network with fewer staff, no



ticket offices or train guards and driver only operated trains. This comes at the cost of undermining safety, leading to potential disasters.

At every turn bosses squeeze out as much profit as possible. That’s why workers are striking back to defend jobs and safety.

Since the privatisation of British Rail the average train ticket has increased by 23.5 percent.

It means guaranteed profit for the



Bosses squeeze as much profit as possible. That’s why workers are striking

EVEN billionaires such as Richard Branson (left) were able to cash-in on Tory rail privatisation. Bosses running railways often ends in unhappiness, as fans of children’s TV series Thomas the Tank Engine will testify (below)

Tories turned running railways into a rich man’s bidding war

BRITISH RAILWAYS was owned by the state from 1948. It was part of a large number of state run services and industries.

Under the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher that came to power in 1979 publicly owned industries were sold off to the rich.

Thatcher sold off state owned businesses related to the railways including British Rail Engineering Limited, which was a train building company. She also sold off British Petroleum, British Gas, British Telecom and British Steel.

It was under Thatcher’s successor John Major in 1994 that the railway’s privatisation began.

Various regulatory functions were given to the Rail Regulator—an office that regulates the railways. Ownership of the infrastructure now belonged to Railtrack and track maintenance services were sold to 13 companies.

Rail privatisation failures come down to passenger trains being owned as rolling stock by companies who lease the trains to train operators. This created a franchising competition.

The government has a say in where trains operate and when, but train operating companies bid for these franchises. Here they often



Former Tory prime minister John Major

overpromise and under perform.

Bidders expect certain passenger numbers and profits, leading to hypothetical franchise payments. If passengers don’t use the service as expected, profit slows.

The company then fails to make the payments it promised in the bidding process, creating a vicious cycle.

Great Northern Rail was the first operator of the intercity east coast route and is an example of the disasters of privatisation. It over bid and failed to pay what was owed.

The government forced the franchise into the hands of another private company, National Express,

in 2007. But just two years later bosses forecasted too many passengers, over-bid and failed to make payments.

National Express lost the service in 2009 and the government temporarily renationalised it.

The government organisation was named East Coast and operated until 2013. Stagecoach and Virgin won the bid in a joint venture. The same happened to them as it did to GNR and National Express.

During this period the nationalised service had some successes. East Coast ranked fourth in overall satisfaction and value for money, delays were rarer than the majority of other lines and it made £1 billion that went back to the state.

But the Tories are still hell bent on privatising services. They want private firms to run industries and services—and for private sector bosses to reap the profits.

To overturn that system requires tackling the whole system of prioritising profit.



The Tories said privatisation would encourage competition and lower prices. But now just a few firms control the market. Abellio owns Greater Anglia, East Midlands Railway, West Midlands Railway and jointly own Northern Trains with Serco



Public transport is just the ticket

WE DESPERATELY need affordable and green public transport in a time of climate and cost of living crises. But mass transportation systems are tied to the structures of capitalism.

Historically, trains were used to transport raw materials from mines to ports. Now they are used to transport workers to city centres and speed the movement of freight.

A truly sustainable and practical public transport system will never exist while the railways are privatised and fragmented. Overcoming this requires a complete restructuring of society.

It means going further than just modernising rail routes to “smart railways”.

Public transportation produces just five to ten percent of the greenhouse gases emitted by cars, which are responsible for 25 percent of emissions.

That means fighting for the end of cars that guzzle fuel, and for domestic flying to be ended. That has to be done alongside a just transition for workers involved and a transport system that serves working class people.

But currently a one way ticket from London to Glasgow is over £140 when bought on the day yet a plane ticket a day in advance is £117.

To make green and public travel an affordable reality, all public transport

must be free and publicly funded. That also means accessibility for disabled people and consideration for older and young people.

This is the best way to increase the use of trains to help slow carbon emissions.

There are still battles to be won under the current system, such as switching to electric trains everywhere and fighting for these to be run on renewable energy. Less than 40 percent of British railways are electric, and changing this would also create green jobs.

Reality

But a free and truly green public transport won’t be a reality under capitalism. That requires a fight against the forces who profit from travel on the tracks, roads, seas and skies.

Beating back the threat of climate change also requires more than just restructuring public transport.

The entire system we live under has to be ripped apart to put the planet before profits.

For profit to be side-lined ordinary people must rally against transport bosses and their friends sitting in banks, construction companies and Parliament. It is a fight that the rail workers have started but one that all workers must finish.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party meetings



PROTESTERS OPPOSE deportations to Rwanda

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Tear down the borders—why we oppose all immigration controls

OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY

Wed 29 June, 7pm
861-2001-6477

WIGAN

Thu 30 June, 7pm
The Old Courts, Gerrard Winstanley House, Crawford St, WN1 1NA

BIRMINGHAM

Marxism, moral panics and the war on trans people

Wed 29 June, 7pm

281-634-5938

BLACK COUNTRY,

SHROPSHIRE & STAFFORD

From railways to refuse workers—can strikes win?

Wed 29 June, 7.30pm

914-9548-1031

BRISTOL

Why are prices rising and how can we make the bosses pay?

Wed 29 June, 7.30pm

Peoples Republic of Stokes

Croft, 14 Hillgrove St, BS2 8JT

688-397-3148

CAMBRIDGE

Palestine—a revolutionary strategy for liberation

Thu 30 June, 7.30pm

681-800-4408

CARDIFF

Is a united Ireland possible?

Wed 29 June, 7.30pm

630-181-4857

CHESTERFIELD

Are we entering a new era of strikes?

Wed 29 June, 7pm

Assembly Rooms, 13/14

Chesterfield Rd, S40 1AR

828-532-8731

COLCHESTER

Roe v. Wade—how do we defend abortion rights?

Thu 30 June, 7.30pm

Old Heath Community Centre, D'Arcy Rd,

C02 8BB

885-9668-6814

COVENTRY

Marxism, moral panic and the war on trans people

Wed 29 June, 7.30pm

823-945-1917

DEVON & CORNWALL

Why Marxism is still relevant today

Thu 30 June, 7.30pm

865-2972-2883

EAST MIDLANDS

Did Lenin lead to Stalin?

Wed 29 June, 7pm

868-9106-9359

EDINBURGH

The origins of the International Socialists

Wed 29 June, 7.30pm

Southsiders,

3-7 W Richmond St,

EH8 9EF

868-9106-9359

HOME COUNTIES

The great Miners' Strike of 1984—how could it have won?

Thu 30 June,

6.30pm

8341-170-103

KENT

Socialists and the Second World War

Thu 30 June, 7.30pm

Nucleus Arts Centre,

272 High St, Chatham

ME4 4BP

434-623-8064

LONDON: HACKNEY

Antisemitism in Britain today

Thu 30 June, 7.30pm

Halkevi Community Centre,

31-33,

Dalston Lane,

E8 3DF

854-8245-8715

LONDON: NEWHAM

Covid, capitalism and disability

Wed 29 June, 7pm

Stratford Advice Arcade, 107-

109 The Grove, E15 1HP

288-098-8827

LONDON: SOUTH

From porn in Parliament to spiking—why does sexism run so deep?

Wed 29 June,

7pm

Vida Walsh Centre,

2B Saltoun Rd,

SW2 1EP

497-196-1801

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

After the French elections—the far right and the left

Wed 29 June, 7.30pm,

543-023-057

MANCHESTER

A rebel's guide to Trotsky

Wed 29 June, 7pm

Friends' Meeting House,

6 Mount St, M2 5NS

NORWICH

Fighting for abortion rights

Wed 29 June, 7.30pm

Butterfly Cafe, 114A King St,

NR1 1QE, 906-652-5299

PORTSMOUTH

How can Palestine be free?

Wed 29 June, 7.30pm

Somerstown Community Centre, Winston Churchill Ave,

P05 4JJ, 488-934-2809

WIGAN

Why we oppose all immigration controls

Thu 30 June, 7pm

Gerrard Winstanley House,

Crawford St, WN1 1NA

894-2628-7708

YORK & SCARBOROUGH

The radical roots of pride

Wed 29 June, 7.30pm

827-489-7492

BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop



The Labour Party—a Marxist History

by Tony Cliff, Donny Gluckstein and Charlie Kimber, £14.99



Breaking Up the British State—Scotland, Independence and Socialism £12



Does privilege explain racism?

by Esme Choonara, Ken Olende, Yuri Prasad and Weyman Bennett, £3



Transgender Resistance

by Laura Miles £10

PHONE 020 7637 1848 WEB bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

CONTACT THE SWP

Phone 020 7840 5600
Email enquiries@
swp.org.uk
Post PO Box 74955
London E16 9EJ

Voices of those who lived and died with Aids resurrected

Aids—The Unheard Tapes plays recorded interviews with some of the first casualties—giving insight into struggles not long past, says **Isabel Ringrose**

AIDS: THE Unheard Tapes tells the tragic and brave first-hand stories of gay men with the disease throughout the 1980s and 90s. Their words, never broadcasted before, are lip synced and shown alongside footage of them.

These are accompanied by modern day interviews with activists, scientists and doctors who fought the virus and campaigned against the onslaught of lies and homophobia.

Part One—Ignorance starts with the life of Terry Higgins, the first recorded Aids death in Britain 40 years ago.

His friends and partner Rupert Whitaker set up the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) to support those with HIV/Aids.

In 1982, as the voices explain, gay men were second class citizens. An underground culture of nightclubs that were “sexually charged playgrounds” grew in opposition to the world’s hatred.

Having sex with as many men as possible was an act of defiance and liberation.

But news reports started to spread of a rare form of cancer affecting gay men in the US.

Theories spread about whether it was deliberately manufactured, or how it was passed on.

Panic

Aids reached Britain and growing misinformation created panic and dread. THT and the Gay Switchboard, the only support services available, moved fast as Margaret Thatcher’s government refused to act.

Young and otherwise healthy men died horrendous deaths. “Because it was sexually spread



ACTORS LIP synch to recordings of real people such as Michael

among homosexuals there was a complete lack of concern,” activist Tony Whitehead says.

An antibody test was created in 1984, but a positive result became a death sentence as no treatment existed. THT tried to educate gay men about a new concept—safe sex and positive alternatives—by leafleting clubs and bars.

“This was an uphill battle,” Whitaker explains.

Those with the virus tried to stay healthy but were in the dark about what was killing them.

Many without a diagnosis wanted to carry on living, and dismissed the dark reality of HIV/Aids.

The deep shame of catching the virus was supported by a media frenzy stigmatising, demonising and victim blaming gay men. This drove homophobic attacks.

Warzone

“We were in the middle of a warzone,” Michael, one of those whose voices we hear, says.

“It was a rod to beat gay men with but also to put out misinformation, lies and created a climate of bigotry and homophobia.”

Meanwhile young men died isolated and scared.

“Do you realise what this means?” John says his doctor asked. “You will die and kill anyone if you have sex, and you can’t get life insurance or a mortgage. I sat there completely stunned,” John recalls.

These stories of those affected—and how many courageously resisted the horror—is a valuable insight into the reality of the Aids crisis.

Aids: The Unheard Tapes starts Mon 27 Jun, 9.30pm on BBC2 and then on BBC iPlayer

Much needed laughter in the face of the apocalypse

RADIO

TOM BALLARD—SOLASTALGIA

On BBC Radio 4, Sun 26 Jun, 5.15pm and then on BBC Sounds

TOM Ballard’s Solastalgia on Radio 4 is definitely worth a listen for anyone feeling exasperated by politicians’ complacency over climate change.

I actually saw Tom Ballard not too long before listening to this when he was a surprise appearance

at a cheap comedy night.

He started by declaring himself a socialist who thinks the only way to get rid of capitalism is through revolution—but who can’t be bothered to attend branch meetings.

It was an incredibly niche joke that got a small laugh and a single “woot” from me.

This set is not quite so niche. But it’s worth having that story in mind.

Ballard explores the difficulties of tackling climate change in

Australia, and being an activist amid what seems to a lot of us to be the general collapse of society.

The act is not for the faint hearted and at times comes across as slightly depressing.

But I found myself laughing the whole way through.

It’s a good sign of the times that comics like Ballard feel more confident to express radical left politics in their performance and

take on issues such as standing up to the fossil fuel giants.

Ballard starts the set saying that climate change is something that comics find challenging to joke about.

As a political comic myself, I can confirm that’s definitely true.

But I think he managed to find a way to make a joke out of the possible end of the world—and it’s a laugh I very much needed.

Jasmine Fischer

TELEVISION

BACK IN TIME FOR BIRMINGHAM

All this week at 8pm on BBC2 and then on BBC iPlayer

THIS SERIES sees the Sharma family go back in time to discover what life was like for South Asian families settling in Britain from the 1950s onwards.

The city of Birmingham is now home to more than 250,000 people of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan descent.

Based here, the family experiences how their parents’ and grandparents’ generations made new lives for themselves in the city—from arriving in postwar Britain to the 21st century.

This includes the jobs these new arrivals did, the homes they lived in and how they entertained themselves, as well as the impact of changing immigration policies on ordinary families.

The Sharmas discover how the experiences of this pioneer generation have influenced not just their own lives but have helped shape the modern multicultural Britain of today.

Guiding the Sharmas on their journey are BBC Asian Network’s DJ turned



Akash and Vishal

presenter Noreen Khan and historian Yasmin Khan, whose own family members both migrated from Pakistan in the latter half of the 20th century.

The Sharmas, whose family are Hindu and originally came from India and Uganda, are living in Sparkbrook.

Now a predominantly Muslim/Pakistani suburb of Birmingham, in 1950 it was one of a handful of neighbourhoods in the city where new arrivals from across the subcontinent and of all faiths began to settle.

Father Vishal and 19 year old son Akash arrive first and are shocked at the accommodation available in 1950—a dingy room with a bed they must share on a rota, and access to a basic kitchen and bathroom.

While Vishal puts in a shift at one of Birmingham’s many factories, Akash’s culinary skills are put to the test by a 1950s larder.

Tom Ballard

Arguments about how we tackle the climate crisis are raging at every level of society, from those at the top to activists on the ground.

As war in Ukraine grinds on, states are sprinting to invest in more fossil fuels. Martin Empson's new book, *Socialism or Extinction—The meaning of Revolution in a Time of Ecological Disaster*, takes on what sort of revolution we need to stop climate destruction.

It is a tool kit for activists, and argues a profit-led system is leading to climate collapse. But the book also says there is a way out.

To understand how to fight the climate crisis that faces us, it is essential to know where it came from.

The starting chapters explore how capitalism, a system which began in Britain and parts of Low Land Europe in the 17th century, has created a climate crisis.

Drawing on the writings of the revolutionary Karl Marx, Martin makes the case that capitalist accumulation and competition “smashed humanity’s relationship with nature apart.”

“Because competitive accumulation is central to capitalist production, there is no limit on the system’s degradation of nature” writes Martin.

“It is the uncontrolled accumulation of wealth, for the sake of further accumulation, that drives capitalism’s destruction of nature.

“Just as capitalism cannot function without exploitation of human labour, it cannot avoid destroying nature in an uncontrolled, irrational, unplanned way.”

And the irrational nature of the system we live in is plain to see. While billions go hungry, Martin cites that in 2018 the British food industry threw away 9.5 million tonnes of waste food.

But how did this irrational system become so deadly to the planet?

Parted

Scientists and environmental campaigners argue that fossil fuel production must stop. Yet those in power refuse to be parted with them.

The book also answers why the system is unable to break from fossil fuels, and how they got locked into the system in the first place.

Martin argues that while early capitalist production did not necessarily require the use of fossil fuels, it spurred it on.

“Competitive accumulation is what defines capitalism, not the use of fossil fuels,” he writes.

“Early capitalist production did not require fossil fuels, and their adoption was the result of class struggle—the

interests of the capitalist class conflicting with the interests of the workers.

“It was because factory and mill owners wanted to improve their exploitation of the workers that they began the transition to fossil fuels.”

The Industrial Revolution saw the creation and development of new technology that transformed production. Quickly the system became hooked on steam power, which was generated by burning coal.

didn’t chain production to the countryside and proximity to rivers.

Martin writes, “Because coal could be transported to anywhere it was needed, steam power allowed the capitalist to build factories and mills where the workers’ were located.”

He adds, “The ability to better exploit labour is a key reason why the switch to fossil fuel production took place so quickly—in a matter of a couple of decades.”

Access to the human labour needed to keep profits flowing was always a necessity for the capitalists. They required workers to run their new colossal factories.

And as Martin says, this led to the ruling class mounting a “brutal process of enclosure and the destruction of traditional rural social organisation.”

But as the book points out, this wholesale move to fossil fuel use was met with resistance from ordinary people.

FROM THE struggle against the enclosure of common land to the Luddite movement of the early 1800s, which opposed machinery to maximise profit, workers have always fought back.

And it is this kind of resistance, not just to the fossil fuel industry but to the whole capitalist system, that we need today.

It is resistance that the final chapters of the book focuses on.

Arguments rage within the environmental movement about what must be done to make change. In the later parts of the book, Martin takes on several of these arguments.

One argument about protests is made by some in the climate movement, such as Roger Hallam, a co-founder and ex-member of Extinction Rebellion (XR). He says that so-called “A to B marches” are ineffective.

Disruptive

Instead Hallam advocates for non-violent disruptive action, which he believes those in power are likely to notice.

But as Martin rightly points out, “A to B marches” have some real benefits.

Using the example of the mobilisation of millions of people against the Iraq war, he points out that although the demos didn’t stop the war on Iraq, they did make it difficult for the government to attack Iran and Syria.

Even more importantly, big mobilisations, as Martin says, can boost the confidence of working class people and lead to a broader fight against the system.

And this broad fight must combine all forms of action, from “A to B marches, to strikes and to direct action.

Martin writes, “The most radical action possible is workers going on strike precisely because it hits profits and is a direct challenge to the system.

In doing this, workers are raising the potential for alternative forms of power.” And importantly, he is keen to stress the centrality of workers in the climate struggle. He writes, “Workers are not separate to the environmental movement.

“Most people on XR protests, climate strikes or the Cop26 demonstrations will work for a living. However, the working class is much larger than the environmental movement.

“The movement must reach out to the wider working class and maximise the involvement of workers in our protests and demonstrations.”

While small groups of committed activists might have the power to shut down some fossil fuel infrastructure, workers withdrawing their labour can shut it down for good.

THE book’s early chapters clearly explain that capitalism leads us to destruction, and the later parts set out a clear plan of how we can upend the system itself.

And as Martin says, only overturning the capitalist state and revolution—can do this.

The book draws on several examples of revolutionary uprisings, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Egyptian revolution of 2011, highlighting the successes and failures of these revolutions.

Martin says that a revolutionary party was needed in many cases to intervene in the struggles with arguments to guide the working class.

But these accounts also show that ordinary people will rise against oppression, tyranny and poverty.

Warnings

As the warnings about the climate crisis become starker, and with the climate movement remaining relatively small, some activists may fall into despair.

Socialism or Extinction provides an antidote to this pessimism and is an assurance that hope can be found in ordinary people.

Fixing around 200 years of unabated fossil fuel use will be a momentous task.

So in the last chapters of the book, Martin argues for a solution—a democratically planned society that puts ordinary people in charge.

He explains, “Unlike under capitalism where governments hope that industries,

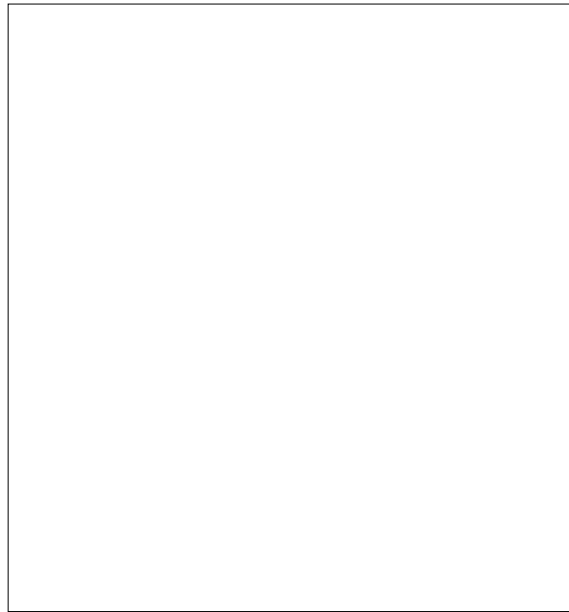
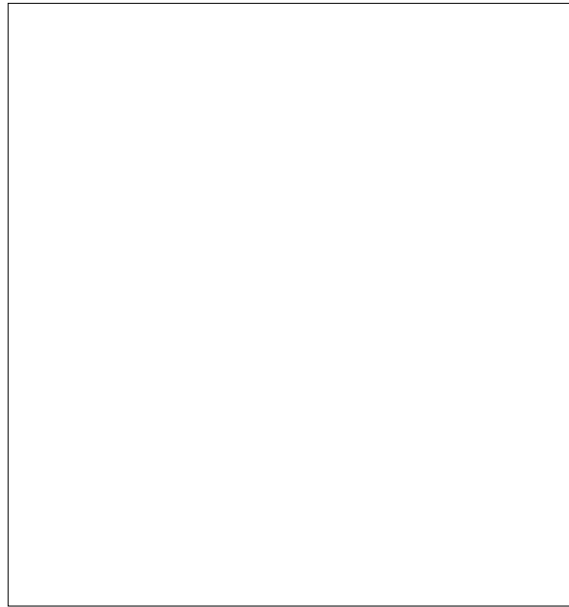
organisations or workplaces will reduce their emissions in line with their targets, as an add-on to their normal activities, a socialist planned economy would see tackling climate change—and other ecological issues—as intrinsic to their day-to-day behaviour.

“Indeed a socialist world would prioritise action on the climate crisis, in contrast to capitalism, which fails to deploy resources and wealth to tackle the issue.

“Under socialism, addressing the ecological crisis would require immediate and priority use of resources and labour.”

Drawing on a history of resistance, this book shows that renewed struggle is more than possible today.

Socialism or Extinction is essential reading for all of those in the climate movement.



Martin Empson analyses revolutionary struggle such as in Egypt, 2011 (top) Extinction Rebellion activists demand an end to fossil fuels as they march towards Buckingham Palace in London (above)

READ MORE

● **Socialism or Extinction: The Meaning of Revolution in a time of Ecological Crisis** by Martin Empson, £10
● **Martin Empson will be speaking at the Marxism 2022 festival**
Go to socialistworker.co.uk/marxismfestival

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



LGBT+ Pride and the class battles that lie beneath it

The right is on the war path against pride flags and symbols—and that’s a good reason to cheer them, says **Isabel Ringrose**

WE ARE celebrating 50 years of Pride in Britain this June, but the flags and positive coverage are proving too much for the right.

Their media complain about a rise in diversity officers and inclusivity awareness.

The new pride flags—with black stripes, trans colours and others with intersex symbols—have further ruffled feathers for their “wokeness”.

Pushing for liberation threatens the oppression the right thrives off. Homophobia, sexism and racism divide ordinary people, especially in a time of crisis.

The right frames any advances as an attack on their “freedom” to spout hatred.

In reality limiting conversations about LGBT+ issues means blocking opportunities for a unified fightback.

Symbols that celebrate and recognise diversity are an important beacon to illustrate the gains that have been made.

We should defend them.

Wearing rainbow lanyards can open a dialogue about issues for LGBT+ people.

It’s harder to be homophobic if pride is acknowledged and recognised in a workplace.

Endorsements

Companies and brands change their logos to include pride colours in the summer months.

But sometimes these endorsements come at a price. Big firms hope that by backing pride they can cash in on the “pink pound”.

But they also hope to gain some control of the battle for liberation, defining its limits and setting boundaries on what tactics are appropriate.

That can be seen in the way a number of big organisations, including the BBC, withdrew their support for a programme run by

the Stonewall liberation campaign because of its insistence on trans rights.

Corporations that claim to back pride must be told it is not enough to just fly a flag.

What policies are in place to support LGBT+ people all year round?

Is the equalities officer a purely tick box role or do they create an open environment?

Visibility is no good unless it results in advances for LGBT+ people. But there are also limitations to the material changes that can be made.

Most institutions are part of a system that reproduces oppression in the first place, which contradicts their actions.

The Home Office has changed its Twitter picture to a pride flag.

What an insult to the LGBT+ refugees fleeing for their lives facing deportation from Britain to countries where people are persecuted because of their sexuality.

The Royal Opera House is flying a pride flag, but it is part of a chain of exploitation.

Cleaners there are battling bosses who maintain a £10

an hour wage. NHS facilities have a big push towards showing off the rainbow.

But workers are still overworked and outsourced, and severe underfunding means a limited number of LGBT+ services and long wait times.

In 2020 train operator Avanti West Coast unveiled its Pride train.

It was crewed by an entirely LGBT+ team.

Other train companies jumped on the initiative, providing visibility for Pride Month.

But what’s the value of an LGBT+ train crew that lives in constant fear of being unable to pay their bills, or of losing their job?

Oppression

Every working class person should back the upcoming rail strikes because it’s in their interest to fight the system causing oppression.

LGBT+ people have more in common with those striking than the bosses who chose to be inclusive for their own gain.

Bosses pose as friends of the oppressed, but they still hold down wages and rights.

That’s why initiatives should be fought for from below by trade unions.

When it comes to upholding rights those at the top will always do what’s best for the system they serve—and act as it dictates.

Pride Month may be contradictory when it comes to who backs it and why.

But when the right gathers to attack, it is important to defend the gains that have been won.

“What value an LGBT+ train crew that lives in fear of paying their bills?”

PROTESTERS TARGET the City of London to pressure banks to stop funding fossil fuels

IT’S SOCIALISM OR EXTINCTION

Martin Empson’s new book argues for a revolutionary transformation away from fossil fuel capitalism. **Sophie Squire** reviews the strategy and tactics he says we need to avoid climate disaster

Karl Marx

“Workers’ struggles are not separate from the climate movement

Report finds ‘culture of fear’ in gymnastics

by SARAH BATES

COUNTLESS YOUNG people have suffered at the hands of abusive gymnastics coaches, a damning new report has found.

The Whyte Review, released last Thursday, looked at sports governing body British Gymnastics (BG) during the period 2008-2020.

Over 400 people submitted evidence to QC Anne Whyte, who led the investigation.

She writes that over 40 percent described physically abusive behaviour during training—a horror that some gymnasts will carry with them for a lifetime.

Punishment

They reported that coaches would inflict physical punishment if they were late for training, were injured or put on weight.

Some reported gymnasts being strapped to bars for extended periods, “sometimes in great distress”.

One elite gymnast said they were forced to stand on the beam for two hours because they were, “frightened to attempt a particular skill”.

SOME ATHLETES were forced to stand on a beam for up to two hours

And over 50 percent of respondents reported emotional abuse, including, “shouting, swearing, name calling and use of belittling language.”

“Gymnasts reported feeling humiliated in front of others and as if they could not express their feelings or make choices about their gymnastics, and, at times, their life outside of gymnastics,” writes Whyte.

One gymnast said, “The coach would shout and scream in our faces so close that I could smell (their) breath and feel (their) spit landing on my face.”

Whyte details a “culture of fear” operating in the sport, where gymnasts are too afraid to question or report coaches.

Often, the gymnast’s fear was borne of the power imbalance in the relationship between talented gymnasts

and successful coaches. This had taken root early in the relationship.

“It was easily maintained because some coaches continued to treat adolescents and young adults, especially females, like children and failed to involve them (and their parents) sufficiently in decision making and in discussion.”

It details particularly intense relationships where

gymnasts were, “in some cases spending more time with the coach than with parents”.

For many, it was a relationship with fear at the centre of it. And around a quarter of people mentioned coaches’ obsession with their weights to be distressing.

Tyranny

Some report being weighed every single day, and Whyte describes a “tyranny of the scales”. One describes, “I would not eat the night before to ensure I was lighter on the scale the next morning.”

“I would take laxatives to ensure I could poo prior to weigh-ins, or I would limit my consumption of water to ensure I was not counting much water weight.”

The revelations are horrifying. They show that wider societal pressure to be thin or have the right body shape is magnified in the sporting world.

And the abuse at every level within the sport was at epidemic levels.

The report argues that vulnerable young people were “infantilised by determined and dominant coaches. This

process has deprived too many gymnasts of the essential decision-making skills that they need to prepare them for life beyond the gym or podium.”

BG has 300,000 to 400,000 members—75 percent of them children and young people.

Despite this, the Whyte Review details how BG operated “safeguarding on the cheap”, relying on individual clubs to draft safety documents and volunteers to monitor welfare.

This all reveals a much broader issue of how elite sport treats people.

In order to compete, coaches and managers push people’s bodies to the brink. Their physical and mental health is often impacted.

And because so-called “perfection” is expected in sports like gymnastics, abuse often follows.

Under capitalism sport is distorted by the wider ideology of competition. Children and young people are among those who pay the price.

What’s your story?

Email with your ideas
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Don't swallow Tory myth of the 'wage-price spiral'

With Boris Johnson passing the blame for rising prices onto workers' pay demands, **Nick Clark** examines who is really causing soaring inflation today

IT HAD to happen sooner or later. In the face of the social emergency of rising prices, the Tories have—inevitably—blamed ordinary people.

Boris Johnson last week said the prospect of a “wage-price spiral” is the real threat. Under this theory of inflation, workers ask for more as the cost of living crisis worsens.

In turn, bosses raise prices further to protect their profits after spending extra on wages or make more money from workers' ability to buy stuff.

Typically, politicians and establishment economists don't blame the bosses for hiking prices but workers for demanding more wages.

Yet wage rises aren't driving inflation at all. Average wages in Britain are falling at the fastest rate for more than two decades.

Now, taking inflation into account, average total pay between February and April this year has fallen by 2.2 percent compared to last year.

That's according to the Office of National Statistics, using the CPI rate of inflation, which doesn't take housing costs into account. So the real fall will be even higher.

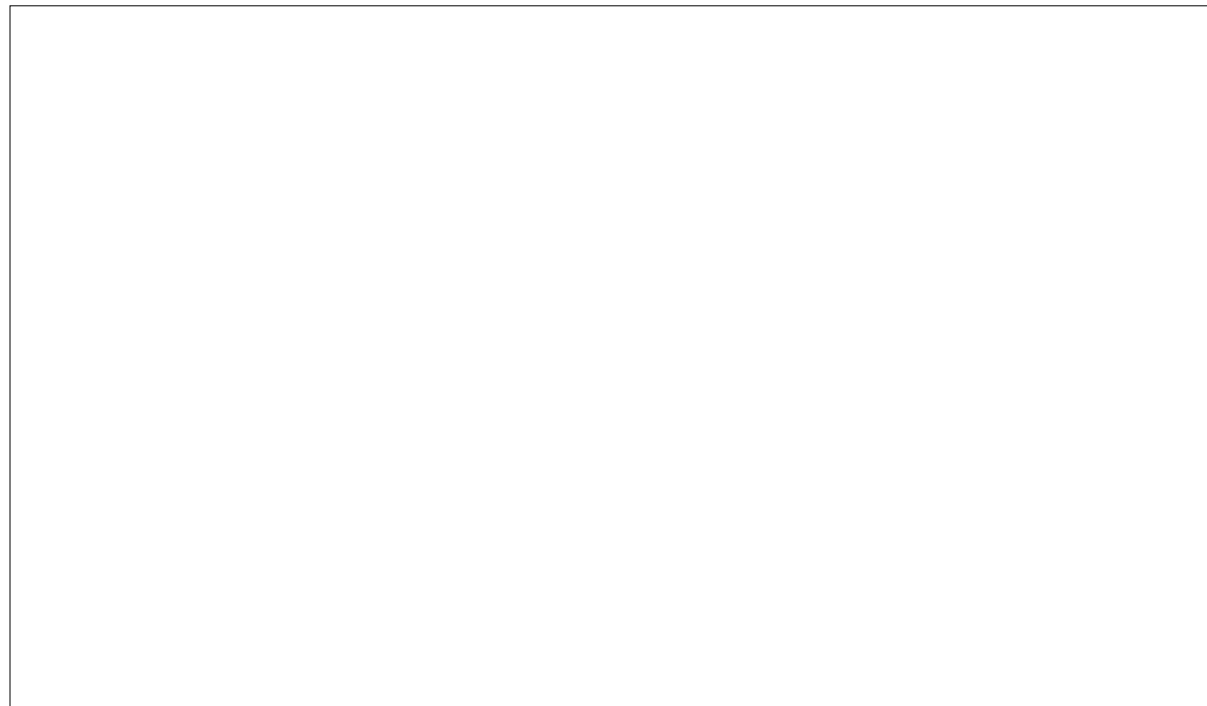
Alternative

But it suits governments, bankers and mainstream economists to fixate on wage “growth” because the alternative is to acknowledge the real problem—profiteering.

All sorts of events can trigger price rises, and a number of them have all come together in the past two or three years.

Shifts in supply and demand don't determine a commodity's price.

But they can cause prices to fluctuate around its value, which is determined by the average labour



JOHNSON, THE Tories and the bosses toast passing the blame for their crisis onto ordinary people

time required to produce it. A sudden shortage in supply, or a sudden increase in demand, can lead bosses to hike prices.

So when the coronavirus pandemic shut down production and disrupted distribution, it caused commodity shortages that were then followed by increased demand.

At around the same time, a number of governments shifted away from coal usage and increased demand for liquefied natural gas.

Gas prices rose even higher after Russia invaded Ukraine, and Western governments responded with demands to stop buying its gas.

Oil prices rose too, as the Opec+ grouping of oil producing countries refused to speed up production. It was a similar story with food prices.

All of these are problems that stem from the chaotic, unplanned, nature of capitalism.

But the thing that turns these price spikes into inflation is profiteering. For a start, bosses take advantage of shortages and demand to make mega profits, as the fossil fuel companies have done.

Bankers and investors play a role too, speculating on commodities in shortage—investing and buying to later sell at a profit—pushing and

holding up prices (see right). And all of these factors cause a knock on effect too.

When bosses have to pay more for materials, they raise their own prices to protect their profits.

These price rises get passed right down through a chain reaction to the goods that ordinary people buy in the shops.

So inflation doesn't happen because workers demand more wages—and nor is it some independent force of nature.

It's because bosses want to boost and even protect their profits—and make us pay for it.

They make profit as we go hungry

FOR the big banks and businesses, shortages and disruption are a chance to make huge profits. The only expense is the misery of ordinary people.

All the big energy companies have cashed in on demand for gas and oil by keeping prices high.

BP's profits in the first quarter of the year rose from £2.1 billion to £5 billion in 2022. For Shell, from



Foodbanks are widespread

£2.6 billion to £7.3 billion, and for Exxon Mobil, £2.2 billion to £7.1 billion.

Even US president Joe Biden wrote to the bosses of energy companies to complain, “At a time of war, refinery profit margins well above normal being passed directly onto American families are not acceptable.”

Bankers are cashing in on food shortages too. For them, the war in Ukraine is an opportunity to profit.

In May, investigative journalism outlet Lighthouse Reports revealed how banks encouraged their clients and traders to invest in agricultural trading funds. It said this was likely pushing food prices up even further.

That means disaster on a mass scale. The World Bank has estimated that for each percentage point increase in food prices, 10 million people are thrown into extreme poverty.

Recently the UN humanitarian coordinator warned that Somalia was “on the brink of a deadly famine that could kill hundreds of thousands.”

He said that 213,000 people face starvation by next September.

Banks bumping up interest rates hit workers

“WHEN A wage-price spiral begins, there is only one cure and that is to slam the brakes on rising prices with higher interest rates,” Boris Johnson said earlier this month. And, sure enough, last week the Bank of England raised its interest rates by a quarter—from 1 percent to 1.25 percent.

It followed in the footsteps of the US Federal Reserve, which decided just hours earlier to raise its own interest rate by 0.75 per cent.

When central banks do this, it means they charge commercial banks more to borrow money from them.

The idea is those banks will then pass the cost on to their customers.

People and businesses will be less able to spend money, and prices will come down.

People who bought their houses with a loan will end up with more debt. Landlords will likely pile extra costs on renters.

Central bankers hope for a rise in unemployment



Bank of England raised rates

too, as bosses either sack workers or stop recruiting new ones.

In an interview Federal Reserve chair Jerome

Powell complained that bosses' demand for workers was so high and unemployment so low that it was pushing up wages.

He hopes increasing interest rates will force wages down and unemployment up, even at the risk of triggering a global financial crash.

Powell is now crossing his fingers for a “soft landing”—the hope that the coming crash and increasing unemployment will be limited.

The European Central

Bank is also preparing for a new “debt crisis”—where countries that have borrowed from it can't pay their loans back—after it raises its interest rates next month.

The last one, after 2008, ended in the bank enforcing austerity on countries such as Greece.

That's the future governments, and their central banks are prepared to risk to keep our wages down.

Behind the rate rises—turn to page 6

IN BRIEF

Workers search for a moral Compass

CLEANING workers mounted a defiant protest last week outside London Bridge Hospital to demand an end to poverty pay and better conditions. The workers are outsourced to Compass Group.

Marino, a cleaner in the IWGB union, said, "I don't feel respected at London Bridge Hospital. Despite working hard doing dangerous work during the pandemic, I was harassed by management, bullied into working seven days a week, and disciplined for asking about potential Covid risks in my workplace."

Engineering a pay rise in Stockton

WORKERS AT Darchem Engineering in Stockton-on-Tees struck last Monday and planned to strike for another four days this week.

The engineering firm supplies Hinkley Point C nuclear power station.

The GMB and Unite union members are angry that while welders at the plant were given an additional pay supplement, engineers weren't.

New strikes at New City college

COLLEGE WORKERS across east London could strike over pay, holiday leave and workload.

Members of the UCU union who are part of the New City College group voted on whether to take action last week.

At Hackney College, part of the New City College group, management plans 59 redundancies as part of a fire and rehire push.

Revving up for struggle in Tipton

WORKERS WHO make interiors for luxury car brands McLaren, Aston Martin and Bentley are due to start seven one-day strikes next week.

More than 100 workers at CabAuto in Tipton, West Midlands, earn just £9.90 an hour for cars that sell for up to £700,000.

After a 3 percent offer—more than an 8 percent wage cut in real terms—strikes will take place on Tuesday and Thursday of next week. These will be followed by strikes on 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 July.

The maelstrom of class struggle

WORKERS WHO repair, deliver, install and maintain household appliances for Whirlpool based in Peterborough are voting on strikes over pay.

The Unite union is balloting over a 2.5 percent pay offer.

Whirlpool workers install and repair for Hotpoint, Indesit and Whirlpool. Service engineers based nationwide could also walk out.

TAXI DRIVERS



STRIKERS FORCED the offices of taxi app Bolt to shut after protesting on Wednesday last week. The ADCU union members struck for a day to win better pay and conditions. Uber workers were set to strike this week. More at bit.ly/Bolt0622

All aboard! Arriva bus workers fight back

by SAM ORD

SOME 650 bus workers employed by Arriva at depots across west Yorkshire have been on continuous strike since 6 June and show no sign of slowing down.

Members of the Unite union walked out after rejecting a 4.1 percent pay offer during the cost of living crisis when inflation is over 11 percent.

Arriva bosses tabled another offer that would give workers between 8 percent and 12 percent, depending on their grade. But workers rejected that and have carried on striking.

Workers are right not

to settle for less than inflation, it would be a real terms pay cut.

And negotiations are currently on hold with the workers remaining strong and determined to win.

On the picket line in Wakefield workers sung and chanted as passing cars sounded their horns in support.

Most bus services are cancelled in 20 areas including Wakefield, Dewsbury, Bradford, Leeds, Huddersfield and York.

And another pay battle is set to give the Arriva bosses a headache.

Some 1,800 workers across the north west of England have started

a strike ballot after rejecting a low pay offer.

The offer involved a maximum increase of 3 percent or 6 percent with reductions in sick pay and loss of Saturday enhanced pay.

Currently the bus drivers are paid just over £11 an hour.

If they walk out it will disrupt services that operate throughout Birkenhead, Bolton, Bootle, Liverpool, Macclesfield, Manchester, Runcorn, Southport, Speke, St Helens, and Winsford.

Low paid workers deserve better—but it is likely to take a fight similar to the one being waged in west Yorkshire to win.

REFUSE WORKERS

Wealden strikers 'mixed feelings' about pay deal

REFUSE WORKERS in Wealden, east Sussex, have accepted a pay offer after striking for seven weeks.

But not everyone is celebrating outsourcer Biffa's new deal.

The offer was heralded as "massive" by the GMB union, which wrote, "Biffa's latest pay offer will constitute a pay rise of more than 27 percent for some workers."

But some workers aren't so convinced. Striker Harry told Socialist Worker that he had "mixed feelings" about the outcome.

The new agreement is a two-year deal. It will see loaders' pay rise to £10.80 an hour. LGV drivers will get £11.40, and HGV drivers will get £13.50 this year. They will see their pay increase again next year by around 8 percent.

Harry told Socialist Worker that the £10.80 falls short of what workers wanted, "We wanted at least £12 an hour,

originally we wanted £15," he said. He also added the workers would receive a lump sum next payday of upwards of £600. But he rightly said that as the cost of living crisis rages, this probably won't go far.

"That money will just about cover our gas and electricity. We've got guys at work that, when they are paid, have just £50 to live on for the month," he said. "Workers here are going to foodbanks."

"We often lend colleagues an extra £50, so they can get through."

Harry added that a very small number of workers voted to return to work and accept the deal.

"We had two votes on Tuesday," said Harry. "On the second almost 40 of us voted to reject the offer, and only four or five voted to go back."

"But we said even if one of us wanted to go back, we'd walk in together."

●Harry is a pseudonym

COVENTRY

A solidarity shout out

BIN STRIKERS in Coventry are still holding out against the Labour-led council in their dispute over pay.

A deal is close to being made, but issues over existing and built-up holiday pay are preventing a completed deal.

And no settlement will be agreed that does not include the withdrawal of disciplinary action against deputy convenor Pete Randle.

Workers have been on all-out strike for better pay since January. The Unite union must ensure any back to work agreement doesn't impact negatively on the

strikers. To keep up the pressure more rallies and marches should be called.

The Tom White Waste plant should also be hit. It is owned by the council and is being used to coordinate scab labour to undermine the strike.

Trade unionists must continue to financially support the strikers' battle as the long-running strike hits the summer.

● Send donations to Unity Trust Bank a/c Unite WM/7116 Branch Coventry Local Government, Sort code: 60-83-01, a/c number: 20302665
● Send messages of support to Pete.Randle@unitetheunion.org

HOUSING

Property walkout

WORKERS AT Thirteen Housing Group, a housing association in the north east of England and Yorkshire, are set to strike for three weeks.

They were offered just a 3 percent pay rise. And that came with pension changes that will leave some workers £1,000 a year worse off.

The Unite union members are responsible for property maintenance and admin for 35,000 properties.

Unite said "hundreds of its members voted by 83 percent" for strikes.

Strikes were due this Saturday until next Tuesday.

Further walkouts are planned for 2-6 July, 9-14 July and 16-22 July.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Gridlock in south London as traffic wardens walk out

TRAFFIC WARDENS in Wandsworth, south London, took part in lively picket lines on Monday during their strike for better pay and conditions.

Members of the GMB union, who are outsourced to NSL Parking Services, rallied outside their offices and chanted "pay rise."

One striker told Socialist Worker, "It's not an easy job. All you have to do is put on the uniform and walk down the street, and you get abuse."

"People think we get bonuses for handing out more fines, but it's a myth. We are hourly paid."

The traffic wardens are also angry that workers for NSL, who work in different parts of London, are paid more than them.

They also want to be paid

above basic rates of pay for any overtime they do.

The strike has seen solid support from workers.

One worker noted that only five wardens out of the 65 had come into work on Monday.

And the situation has become so dire that even line managers have joined the strike.

Workers were set to strike until Wednesday of this week and from Monday to Wednesday next week.

The same group of workers struck in 2018 when the council was run by the Tories.

GMB regional organiser Paul Grafton said, "Now that the Tories have been ousted from Wandsworth, we will be calling on the Labour leader to bring these important and valuable services back under



Parking is free today

local authority control."

Workers should take heart from the victorious Camden traffic wardens, who have led several successful campaigns of hard-hitting strikes.

As a result, they are paid above the rate of neighbouring boroughs.

Serious action can win Wandsworth traffic wardens a similar result. **Thanks to Ben Windsor**

ROYAL MAIL, BT AND POST OFFICE

'Gloves are off' in three CWU battles

by NICK CLARK

TENS OF thousands of workers—making up the vast bulk of the CWU union—are on course for national strikes over pay.

Telecoms workers in BT group—BT, Openreach and EE—began balloting last week for national strikes.

They are furious after bosses imposed a pay increase of £1,500 without any agreement from the union.

For every worker, that's a real terms pay cut. And CWU union leaders said the "gloves are off" in a battle with Royal Mail too.

Royal Mail bosses announced plans to impose a 2 percent "increase"—well below inflation—on all their workers. Workers were already preparing to ballot after bosses originally tied a proposed increase of just 3.5 percent to a raft of attacks on working conditions.

And CWU members working for the Post Office have already struck for three days this year in their own pay dispute.

The three disputes together mean the bulk of CWU members—a union of more than



ROYAL MAIL and BT can afford a rise too

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

171,300 people—could be headed for set piece battles over the defining issue of pay.

The CWU says the national ballot in BT is the first of its kind since 1987. It's a battle that CWU rep Jonathan Young, who organises mainly among Openreach workers in south London, Surrey and North Hampshire, says has been "a long time coming."

Moves by bosses to change workers' grades—which sparked a strike by a section

of highly skilled engineers last year—seem like the prelude to the attack on pay. "It's been an unhappy camp for a long time in Openreach," Jonathan said.

"The one reason everyone comes to work is for pay and to feed our families, so this is a pretty big one."

He added, "The company is making big profits and offering big bonuses to its chief executives and shareholders, and yet says it can't afford to

offer a pay rise." Jonathan said union activists have been holding regular meetings, aimed at being accessible to every member, to build for the strike vote.

He said there was "a little uncertainty with the members about what it means to go on strike." But, he added, he was "confident" the union would deliver a strike vote. "Everyone is fully behind the CWU," he said.

Meanwhile in Royal Mail, workers have already been gearing up for a national pay ballot with reps organising gate and workplace meetings.

Last week bosses told CWU deputy general secretary for postal Terry Pullinger about plans to impose a 2 percent increase. They also want to push ahead with long-planned attacks on pay rates and working conditions.

"This is P&O in sheep's clothing," Pullinger said in a video message posted to Facebook. "Imposing pay deals, next they'll be trying to impose change. It's an absolute disgrace. They said pay had to be inextricably linked to change and now they're just imposing 2 percent on you. Gloves are off."

UNISON UNION



Unison members on the TUC demonstration

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Look to struggle at base after Unison conference

by SARAH BATES

A BLOODY internal war between the left and right dominated the Unison union national delegate conference last week.

It was the first since the elections of socialist Paul Holmes to the presidency and a left majority of the national executive committee (NEC).

A number of motions on the first day of the conference attacked the NEC. Motion 10 was passed criticising the NEC for allowing Holmes to continue in office despite being unemployed because his employer had sacked him.

Motion 11—which expressed "no confidence" in the NEC—was also passed. It argued that the NEC had changed Unison rules, which is normally only permitted through a vote by conference.

On a "card vote", based on branch numbers, 655,809 voted for, and 389,160 against.

Another motion criticised the lack of black representation among chairs and vice-chairs of sub-committees.

Delegates who support Socialist Worker successfully argued that the left should not oppose this motion.

Problems

The left-led NEC switched to supporting it with the qualification that such problems are long-standing rather than just emerging in the last year.

The motions and rule changes follow Holmes's strong left campaign for general secretary and then his election as union president while he was suspended from his job. He was the victim of an anti-union witchhunt at Kirklees Council and was formally sacked in January 2022, after a disciplinary process lasting two and a half years.

His election helped found the Time for Real Change left campaign within the union.

The rise of the Time for Real Change campaign within Unison has seen attacks on it both within and outside of the union structures.

But just because these unpalatable attacks come from the right, doesn't mean the basic democracy of conference can be ignored.

In a statement on the last day of the conference, the left-led NEC said, "National Delegate Conference is the sovereign body of our union and as such its decisions must be respected."

"The NEC accepts serious mistakes have been made. We apologise to Conference."

The NEC pledged to continue taking action over the cost of living crisis, pay, democracy and equality.

There is a fundamental issue behind all this of formally taking control of a union when many bureaucratic obstacles remain that make shifts to more militant trade unionism difficult.

The left's biggest error is to have fought through the internal channels rather than appealing to the members on the basis of the need for a fight over pay, oppression and other pressing questions.

Covid

Hundreds of thousands of Unison members have seen real terms pay cuts, the horrors of Covid and management bullying. And yet there has been no explosion of resistance to the general secretary's lack of a lead.

NEC member Karen Reissmann told Socialist Worker in a personal capacity, "There's a real feeling of 'them' and 'us'—where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer."

"You can feel that mood on hospital wards and you could feel it on the very big Unison bloc on Saturday's TUC demo. Some of that frustration at the union's inability to fight these attacks was directed at the NEC at the conference."

"As a left, we need to create an organisation that is fit to take on the Tories and the bosses."

The internal turmoil in the union can be solved only by looking outwards and raising the level of struggle from the base.

Unison general secretary Christine McAnea told branches at conference to be "strike ready".

That has to be seized as an opportunity to fight for strikes. Already tens of thousands of local government Unison members in Scotland are balloting for action.

● Full report on conference at bit.ly/SWonUnison2022

NHS AND CARE

>>>from page 20
murkier picture. The Trust is one of many organisations in Bristol set up with money originally made from the slave trade. Its 2020 accounts show an endowment worth at least £293 million generating upwards of £6 million in unrestricted funds.

Some 13 people accounted for "governance costs" of £60,000 each. And at least three top bosses grabbed over £130,000 a year, with one taking home more than £150,000.

In contrast, Socialist Worker has seen an example of carers' pay with an annual salary plus enhancements of around £17,000. This would be slashed to around £14,000.

The Trust comes under the umbrella of the Society of Merchant Venturers, which traces its origins and wealth back to the slave trade. The slaver Edward Colston, whose statue was unceremoniously

dumped into Bristol dock in 2020, was a member. St Monica was set up in the 1920s with funding from a society member in the Wills family—which made its money from tobacco plantations.

Today the Society of Merchant Venturers runs a clutch of independent and state-maintained schools, care homes, social enterprises and parks.

The Trust's accounts reveal plans to expand "external charitable donations" from the money it earns from investments. Cutting staff costs at St Monica could also release money for such giving.

If that's true, some of the poorest paid workers—overwhelmingly women—would see their pay slashed. And it would be to rescue the reputation of a society whose treasures came covered in blood.

● Email messages of support to bristol.unison@bristolunison.co.uk

ROUND-UP

St George's & OCS fights

UNISON UNION members across OCS in Lancashire Care branch are to strike for three days over pay and conditions.

Action is set for Wednesday to Friday next week. Pickets and protest are scheduled at all sites, with the main one at The Harbour in Blackpool.

● Messages of support to Lee. morgan@lancashirecare.nhs.uk

■ STRIKERS AT St George's hospital in south London began a week-long strike on Monday. The cleaners and domestic staff in the GMB union have already mounted 24-hour and 48-hour strikes.

They are fighting contractor Mitie, which withheld their wages while it restructured its payroll. They want compensation and NHS terms and conditions.

● Tweet support to @GMBSouthern

ROUND-UP

WORKERS AT the British Council struck from Wednesday to Friday of last week in a fight to save jobs.

The members of the PCS union are fighting bosses' plans to make hundreds of people redundant in a planned "reorganisation."

Workers struck at British Council offices in London and Manchester, with a rally in Manchester city centre last Thursday.

■ WORKERS AT Our Lady and St George primary school in Walthamstow, east London, are set to walk out on Tuesday of next week over teaching and learning responsibility restructures.

They voted 77 percent yes to strike.

■ WINNS PRIMARY school teachers in Waltham Forest are fighting back against restructures and redundancies. NEU members will launch their formal ballot to strike next week.

The workers hope to replicate the victory at nearby Mayville primary school.

NEW CRISES EXPOSE THE TORY PARTY'S ROT

by SARAH BATES

JUST AS embattled prime minister Boris Johnson averted political decapitation, he stumbles into yet more scandal, corruption and crisis—a toxic cocktail of his own making.

Johnson was staring down the barrel of by-elections in Wakefield and Tiverton set for Thursday of this week.

The circumstances of both by-elections expose who represents Johnson's Tory party. In Wakefield voters will replace Tory Imran Ahmed Khan, who in April was found guilty of sexually assaulting a 15-year-old.

And in Tiverton and Honiton the electorate are finding a replacement for Neil Parish. He resigned after he was caught watching pornography in parliament.

Rumbled

Meanwhile, Johnson has been rumbled by historic revelations that date back to when he was foreign secretary.

It's emerged he tried to bag a job for his then-lover Carrie Symonds as his chief of staff on a salary of at least £100,000 a year. Yet instead of jumping on this explosive



PCS UNION protesters heckle Tory donors at a party fundraiser in west London

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

and highly damaging revelation, some journalists seemed oddly reluctant to run with it.

The Daily Mail newspaper was offered the exclusive but turned it down. The person who supplied the story was told it didn't accord with the newspaper's "general point

of view". Rupert Murdoch's Times was next.

Its journalist Simon Walters investigated, and promptly identified four allies of Johnson who confirmed it. Walters quoted one of Johnson's senior foreign office staffers as saying,

"An illicit relationship with Carrie was none of our business. Making her chief of staff was definitely our business."

Three of Johnson's aides—including Ben Gascoigne, now one of his deputy chiefs of staff—threatened to resign over the proposed

appointment. Walters got the story into the Times on page five last Saturday.

MailOnline, conscious that it couldn't ignore such a big issue once it was public, duly followed it up. Johnson was in Kiev, Ukraine, when he heard that the story was about to

break and quickly forgot all about president Volodymyr Zelensky's problems.

He got his staff on the case and the story was removed from later editions of Saturday's Times. The story promptly disappeared from MailOnline too.

The lives of ordinary people can seem a million miles away from the deceit and corruption of the scum at the top of society. But they do impact each other.

Sleaze

The sleaze dripping from every pore of the Tory Party should infuse a spirit of resistance from below, which can deliver a punch back at those who lord it over us.

And the sight of tens of thousands of rail workers shutting down one of the central arteries of British society will terrify the government.

United working class action is a way to fight back to improve individual jobs, pay and conditions.

It is also the way to fight back against our Conservative Party enemies.

On other pages...

Johnson meets Zelensky as Nato prepares for wider war >>>Page 6

COST OF LIVING

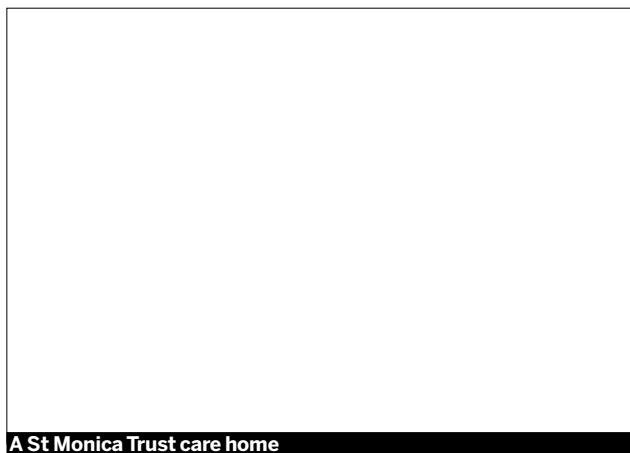
Strike at a Bristol care home charity that has links to the legacy of slavery

by YURI PRASAD

WORKERS AT one of Bristol's biggest elderly care providers are set to strike next week against an attack that could leave them thousands of pounds worse off.

Hundreds of care home staff at the St Monica Trust charity have joined Unison union.

Together with existing members, they voted for action after bosses announced changes to



A St Monica Trust care home

their pay and contracts. Managers want to slash sick pay, cut enhancements for nights and weekends and reduce workers' hours. Some staff will be up to £3,500 a year worse off as a result.

One carer said, "I work nights so I can be with my children."

"As a single mum, cutting hours and pay will have a huge effect on our lives."

"I would worry about costs of school uniforms. I would need

to find another job."

St Monica's managers have refused to recognise or consult with the union. They insist, "No colleague will be worse off".

Yet at the same time staff have been explicitly told if they don't accept the new terms they will be "fired and rehired".

Staff say care standards are being compromised as the Trust loses experienced, permanent staff. Workers' dedication helped keep Covid levels at St

Monica at record lows.

Unison members voted by 82 percent to strike. They plan to be on the picket lines for 24-hour strikes on Wednesday and Saturday of next week and Tuesday 5 July.

This is set to be followed by 48-hour strikes on 10 and 12 July.

St Monica says its move is driven by difficulties in the care sector since the pandemic. But a glance at its funding and top salaries reveals a far >>>Turn to page 19